8 August 2000
English
Original: French

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2000

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Peter **Van De Velde** (Belgium)

I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

5. Improved utilization of conference facilities at the regional centres

Introduction and overview

1. In section B, paragraph 27, of its resolution 54/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure an increase in the utilization of the regional centres in future work programmes and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

2. In addition, in paragraph 120 of its resolution 54/249, the Assembly expressed deep concern about the underutilization of the conference centres in Bangkok and Addis Ababa, and requested the Secretary-General to develop and implement a strategy for increasing their use, and to report thereon to the General Assembly by the end of its fifty-fourth session.

3. At its 429th meeting, on 7 August 2000, the Committee heard an oral report on action taken by the Secretariat in compliance with the above-mentioned requests, pending completion of the final report.

Discussion

4. It was pointed out by the representative of the Secretariat that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services had little control over the activities of the conference centres in Bangkok and Addis Ababa. Although the report that had been requested of the Secretary-General was still being prepared, and would be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, the conclusion was already emerging that a coincidence of constraints was responsible for the low

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rate of utilization of the conference facilities at the two centres. In both cases, there had been uncertainty as to whether it was appropriate to use the centres for non-United Nations activities and for commercial purposes.

5. The representative of the Secretariat adverted to a memorandum from the Legal Counsel to the Executive Secretary of the regional commission in Bangkok to the effect that activities were permissible in the centre's facilities only if they were of a non-commercial nature and consistent with the purposes and principles of the Organization. Clarification was sought as to whether the opinion of the Legal Counsel was still valid, in view of the updated guidelines on the use of the centre. The representative of the Secretariat responded that the legal opinion might have been superseded by events and by decisions of the General Assembly.

6. Furthermore, until very recently, no resources had been earmarked for promoting the centres as venues for non-United Nations events, and the post structure at both duty stations had not included positions specifically assigned to the management of the centres.

7. The view was expressed that the Committee should consider the activities of the conference centres in Bangkok and Addis Ababa separately from those of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, which operated under a different status and a specific set of constraints.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee on Conferences regretted that the report on the improved utilization of conference facilities at the regional centres was not yet available.

9. The Committee took note of the oral report on the subject presented by the representative of the Secretariat.

10. The Committee agreed to keep the item under review and to remain seized of the matter.